

STORIES of New Jersey

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THE OLD BARRACKS

Just off the business center in Trenton, in the shadow of the State House, stands an old building that has represented New Jersey at two world's fairs. Thousands of people saw its duplicates at San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915 and at Philadelphia's Sesquicentennial Exposition in 1926. It is planned that it will again represent the State at the New York World's Fair of 1939. Veteran of two wars, witness of changing times, the Old Barracks, more than any other structure, means New Jersey.

Neither the French nor their allies, the Indians, came very close to Trenton during the French and Indian War (1754-63). But the reports of massacres in northwestern New Jersey and western Pennsylvania were enough to frighten settlers into asking for the protection of British troops. The British officers decided that Trenton, the largest town in the northern Delaware valley, was a suitable point from which to direct military operations.

As the troops crowded into Trenton the colonists had to pay for their safety by giving up their privacy. Soldiers had to be quartered in the wood and stone houses of the town, and the citizens began to resent having to share their small comforts with their protectors. The quartering of troops on citizens throughout the colonies later formed the basis for one of the complaints against King George III, in the Declaration of Independence.

On March 31, 1758, local officials and many of the people who lived in and around Trenton sent a petition to the Colonial legislature, then meeting at Burlington. They could not bear the burden of having soldiers quartered with them "night and day," the petition read.

The legislature immediately appointed a committee to study plans for barracks at Trenton and other places where the people were similarly inconvenienced. The committee recommended that a barracks for 300 soldiers be built at Trenton in the "most cheap" manner possible, not to exceed a cost of £1,400. Four other barracks at Burlington, New Brunswick, Elizabethtown and Perth Amboy were also planned.

Approximately an acre of ground at the west end of Front Street was bought by the commissioners for



The Trenton Barracks